

2009-2011 Alachua County SHIP Local Housing Assistance Plan Issues

A. Homelessness Prevention Services

Social Service and Housing providers to homeless and very low income households such as Inter-Faith Hospitality Network, Office on Homelessness, Gainesville Community Ministries, Alachua County Housing Authority, and Community Support Services Department have identified and expressed the need for funding to assist very low income renter households with security and rental deposits to avoid becoming homeless. This need is identified in the Alachua County Continuum of Care Plan. The establishment of this program would support the objective identified in the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness to target existing housing programs to identify funding sources. While ongoing rental assistance may not be funded by SHIP funds, security and utility deposits are eligible SHIP expenses. This is also an effective means to assist renter households most in need whose incomes are insufficient to purchase homes through the SHIP Program. For these reasons, staff recommends creating a Rental Deposit Program.

B. Diversity in housing stock in Plan East Gainesville Study Area

The Plan East Gainesville Final Report recommends that :

“where affordable housing developments are developed using County assistance, mixed-income projects should be required. For example, single-family or multi-family housing projects funded through the SHIP Program could be required to provide market rate units as a condition of funding approval. This would allow the provision of affordable housing that is integrated with market-rate housing, increasing the diversity of the housing stock.”

For this reason, staff is recommending a mixed-income provision be included in both Single Family and Multi-Family Housing Programs.

C. Funding for New Construction vs. Repair/Replacement

By creating two programs out of the Single Family Housing Development Program, different maximum awards can be identified in the LHAP to assist existing homeowners in need of home repairs/replacement vs. funding for new affordable housing development.

D. Current limitations of Special Needs Program

Changes are needed in this strategy to make it more user friendly and effective in serving the housing needs of special needs population of Alachua County. Elimination of the 50% match requirement and increasing the maximum award per unit may encourage other providers of special needs housing to participate in the program.

E. Consistency between City of Gainesville and Alachua County SHIP Programs.

Requested changes to the Down Payment Assistance Program would provide some degree of consistency between the City of Gainesville and the Alachua County SHIP Program, in response to comments made by lenders, realtors, and City Housing Staff during stakeholder workshops.

F. Essential Service Personnel Definition

Florida Statute 420.9075 3(a) now requires that each local housing assistance plan shall include a definition of essential service personnel for the county or eligible municipality, including, but not limited to, teachers and educators, other school district, community college, and university employees, police and fire personnel, health care personnel, skilled building trades personnel, and other job categories. Each county and each eligible municipality is encouraged but not required to develop a strategy within its local housing assistance plan that emphasizes the recruitment and retention of essential service personnel. For this reason, draft language for Essential Service Personnel Definition is being submitted for the Board's approval.

G. Effective Program Delivery and Timely Expenditure of SHIP Funds

The proposed Housing Delivery Goals provides for an increase in maximum awards for the Down Payment Assistance Programs as well as the Single Family Housing Development Programs. These increases are needed to provide effective delivery of services and to expend SHIP funds in a timely manner. The proposed Housing Delivery Goals Chart demonstrates a commitment to continue its priority to expend the majority of SHIP funds, serving very low and low income households while expending a maximum of 5% per year on moderate income households. This proposal would enable Alachua County to meet all statutory requirements, including but not limited to the requirement to expend SHIP funds from each state fiscal year within a three year period.